
LITERACY IN CANADA
THE CEDAR GLEN DECLARATION

February, 1987

Drafted by

**A Coalition of Canadian Organizations
Concerned About Illiteracy in Canada**

Endorsed by:

- * **Association of Canadian Community Colleges**
- * **Canadian Association for Adult Education**
- * **Canadian Association for Community Education**
- * **Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women**
- * **Canadian Give the Gift of Literacy Foundation**
- * **Canadian library Association Interest Group**
- * **Frontier College**
- * **Laubach Literacy of Canada**
- * **Movement for Canadian Literacy**
- * **World Literacy of Canada**

The Cedar Glen Declaration, 1987

“THE PRIORITY OF LITERACY”

This Declaration was drafted by a coalition of Canadian organizations concerned about illiteracy in Canada. The organizations endorsing this Declaration were: Association of Canadian Community Colleges, Canadian Association for Adult Education, Canadian Association for Community Education, Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women, Canadian Give the Gift of Literacy Foundation, Canadian Library Association Interest Group, Frontier College, Movement for Canadian Literacy, and World Literacy of Canada. Also taking part was Laubach Literacy of Canada.

Introduction

The Cedar Glen Declaration is a statement on public policy formulated by national organizations concerned about illiteracy in Canada. On December 5, 1986, and January 23, 1987, representatives of organizations met as a committee of equal partners to cooperate in the production of this document.

The organizations responsible for this statement are deeply concerned that one in five Canadians cannot read and write well enough to effectively participate in today's society. We recognize that illiteracy is inter-related with poverty, unemployment and decreased national productivity. We further recognize that illiteracy is an inter-generational problem: children are far more likely to be literate if their parents are literate.

Everyone should have the opportunity to participate fully in society as parents, workers and citizens. We therefore believe that literacy must be recognized as a priority issue in Canada. While the recommendations contained in this document are by no means exhaustive, they represent an approach to policy which is both educationally sound and respectful of the needs of a diverse population struggling for the fundamental right to learn.

The literacy movement in Canada represents a considerable depth and breadth of knowledge and experience. It is therefore essential that literacy practitioners and program participants be involved in the development and implementation of public policy.

It should also be recognized that, without adequate support for existing literacy programs and new program initiatives, even the most well-intentioned policy statements will be ineffective. Governments at all levels should recognize their responsibility to undertake affirmative action on behalf of illiterate adults.

We believe that it is of the utmost importance that the federal and provincial levels of government create a policy which recognizes the need for widely based adult education programs and provides the means of supporting them.

I Principles of Public Policy

Literacy is essential for full and successful participation in Canadian society. We believe that equity of access to basic education consti-

tutes a fundamental human right. We believe that this right, the right to learn, should be deemed a priority in public policy at all levels.

WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND THAT:

* Basic education (grades 1-12 or the equivalent) be made available to all Canadians without discrimination, including on the basis of age, sex and place of residence.

* Any upper age limit in the definition of students where such exists in laws governing the provision of basic education be eliminated.

* There be equality in provision for adult basic education relative to provisions for children and youth, thus bringing all laws into conformity with the equality section of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

II Principles of Implementation

Canada as a whole is responsible for meeting the learning needs of all its citizens. Both levels of government should recognize that barriers exist which preclude full access to and participation in adult literacy programs.

In order to meet the literacy needs of Canadian adults, policy is needed as is the commitment of financial support to provide for the implementation of policy. Each level of government should develop and implement policy in its areas of jurisdiction.

The development and implementation of policy at all levels should be the result of a process of consultation with organizations, practitioners and learners in the literacy field.

To be effective, literacy policy should be implemented to include the following elements: programming and support for learners;

access to information; and coordination and advocacy.

II.1 Programming and Support for Learners

Individuals requiring literacy programs have diverse needs. Programs should be learner-centred to accommodate the diverse needs of these individuals.

All adult learners have a right to a voice in decisions regarding the content of their learning. Educationally disadvantaged adults, in particular, need this voice in order to become informed of their rights, their individual and group strengths, and avenues for participation.

The involvement of the learner is essential. All programs should recognize this principle of adult education.

WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND THAT:

* Priority should be given to supporting programs which include learner participation in decisions regarding the content of their learning.

* Programs which reflect the special needs of groups such as women, young people, native people, immigrants and prisoners should be supported. Where practical, people should have the opportunity to become literate in their mother tongue.

Many government training programs which exist require literacy as a prerequisite. Currently, the number of literacy programs across the country is adequate to service only a fraction of the literacy needs in Canada. The programs which do exist often do not have stable, core funding.

WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND THAT:

- * Adequate program funding should be provided for the delivery of existing programs.

- * Funding should be made available for the development of new programs appropriate to the needs of learners.

- * Appropriate provision should be made to include literacy training throughout government training programs.

II.2 Access to Information

Educationally disadvantaged adults face real barriers in gaining access to the information they need.

WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND THAT:

- * All levels of government (as well as business, labour and other groups) should acknowledge that these barriers exist. Staff awareness programs regarding the impact of literacy and illiteracy should be implemented. Programs and services should be examined to ensure that they are offered in a manner which guarantees full access by educationally disadvantaged adults.

- * All levels of government should ensure that information distributed by them is clearly written and easily understandable.

II.3 Coordination and Advocacy

There is a need for increased public awareness about the problem of adult illiteracy in Canada.

WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND THAT:

- * Support should be provided to literacy organizations to carry out public awareness programs at the local, provincial and national levels.

- * Funding support for program development should be carefully synchronized with public awareness efforts, to avoid demand outstripping the supply of programs available.

- * Business, labour and government should be made aware of the need for literacy programs in the workplace and should cooperate in their development.

There is a need for coordination and advocacy in literacy work on the local, provincial and national levels.

WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND THAT:

- * Support should be provided for and independent national resource centre which would provide access to information and resources for all those involved on literacy.

- * Support should be provided for organizations which provide coordination locally, provincially and nationally.

- * New partnerships to support and deliver literacy programs should be developed between these groups and all levels of government.



APPENDIX RESOURCE CENTRE/CLEARINGHOUSE

The Resource Centre/Clearinghouse should be established to:

- * Create a repository for research, learner-written materials, films, software, videos, tapes, books, teaching/tutor manuals, newsletters and ephemera, with an emphasis on Canadian materials.
- * Compile a complete directory of literacy programs and services, including methods, materials, membership, philosophy, etc., to be used as the data base for a national referral service. National-provincial-regional hot-line telephone links offering extended hours of service should be created to enable users anywhere in Canada to find appropriate programs. (Research is needed on existing hot-lines and networks, to prevent duplication of services.)
- * Provide consultative services for programs needing assistance with organizational development, program renewal, recruitment, board development, funding, etc.
- * Publish directories of programs; regularly updated bibliographies of learner-written materials, manuals, etc.; indexes of materials both from the literacy and other related fields; a national literacy newsletter.
- * Develop appropriate outreach/public awareness programs to reach potential users of the resource centre/clearinghouse services, as well as the existing literacy community, and those in related fields.
- * Provide resources for learners and learner-centred activities.
- * Establish working links with library systems across Canada in order to promote and disseminate the centre's publications and services and to develop the library systems as major markets for literacy materials.

**APPENDIX
PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS**

Association of Canadian Community Colleges
Canadian Association for Adult Education
Canadian Association for Community Education
Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women
Canadian Give the Gift of Literacy Foundation
Canadian Library Association Interest Group
Frontier College
Laubach Literacy of Canada
Movement for Canadian Literacy
World Literacy of Canada

OBSERVERS

Southam News
TV Ontario
Canadian Broadcasting Corporation